

The University of Chicago

THE SOUTH CAROLINA RICE  
FACTOR AS REVEALED IN THE  
PAPERS OF ROBERT F.W. ALLSTON

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED  
TO THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF  
THE SOCIAL SCIENCES IN CANDIDACY FOR  
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

  
1945

By

J. H. EASTERBY

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Reprinted from  
THE JOURNAL OF SOUTHERN HISTORY, Vol. 7, No. 2, May, 1941



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# The South Carolina Rice Factor as Revealed in the Papers of Robert F. W. Allston

BY J. H. EASTERBY

In the heyday of rice culture on the South Atlantic coast the Georgetown district of South Carolina was the center of production.<sup>1</sup> Among the leading planters of the district was Robert Francis Withers Allston,<sup>2</sup> sometime governor of South Carolina, author of our best treatise on rice,<sup>3</sup> and father of a daughter who carried on his work into the declining days of the industry and achieved something of a reputation through writings which describe her experiences as a rice planter.<sup>4</sup> Every phase of planting, milling, and marketing is reflected in the abundant store of records which Allston preserved,<sup>5</sup> and from this vantage ground—a rich

<sup>1</sup> Of the total United States crop of 187,167,032 pounds in 1859, Georgetown district produced 55,805,385. *Eighth Census*, 1860, *Agriculture* (Washington, 1864), 129, 185. In 1839 the district's proportion was even larger. *Compendium . . . of the Sixth Census*, 1840 (Washington, 1841), 192, 359.

<sup>2</sup> At the height of his operations (1862) Allston owned nine plantations embracing more than six thousand acres. Additional holdings of timber, pasture, and other lands amounted to approximately nine thousand acres. At one time or another he managed the estates of five deceased relatives and friends. One of these was yielding in 1857 a gross annual return of \$31,479. Figures compiled from the Allston Papers. Allston's career is sketched in J. H. Easterby, "Robert Francis Withers Allston," in *Dictionary of American Biography*, 20 vols. and index (New York, 1928-1937), I, 223-24.

<sup>3</sup> Originally prepared for Edmund Ruffin, *Report of the Commencement and Progress of the Agricultural Survey of South-Carolina for 1843* (Columbia, 1843), and separately printed under the title, *Memoir of the Introduction and Planting of Rice in South-Carolina* (Charleston, 1843).

<sup>4</sup> Patience Pennington [Mrs. Elizabeth W. Allston Pringle], *A Woman Rice Planter* (New York, 1913); Elizabeth W. Allston Pringle, *Chronicles of Chicora Wood* (New York, 1922).

<sup>5</sup> These records were placed in the custody of the writer by the late Mrs. C. Albert Hill, another of Allston's daughters. After selections have been made for a publication sponsored

collection of papers and the geographical center of the rice industry—it is proposed to examine the relationship between the planter and the man who sold his crop, bought his supplies, and attended to a thousand odds and ends for him in the Charleston market. If the latter emerges in this instance in a light more favorable than that which has been shed upon other dealers in southern staples,<sup>6</sup> it may be due to the ability of the Allstons to drive a bargain or to any number of other reasons. A generalization of the rice factorage system must await the careful study of further evidence.

Why Charleston, sixty-five miles down the coast, should have gained preference as a market over the port of Georgetown, which was situated within a few miles of the rice fields on the Waccamaw, Pee Dee, Black, and Santee rivers, has never been satisfactorily explained. Tradition, long accepted as historical fact, puts the blame altogether on a shallow harbor and a shifting bar,<sup>7</sup> but closer study suggests that the stubborn resolve of Charleston to control the trade of the southeastern coastal plain may be an additional, if not a more important, reason. While the citizens of Georgetown were dallying with plans for a deepwater channel at the close of the eighteenth century,<sup>8</sup> Charleston built the Santee Canal up to their very back door. Later the trade of their natural

by the Beveridge Fund of the American Historical Association they will be placed in the South Carolina Historical Society in whom ultimate ownership was vested by Mrs. Hill. Unless otherwise stated all citations to manuscripts are to the Allston Papers.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. John S. Bassett, "The Relation Between the Virginia Planter and the London Merchant," in American Historical Association, *Annual Report*, 1901, I (Washington, 1902), 551-75; *id.*, *The Southern Plantation Overseer as Revealed in His Letters* (Northampton, Mass., 1925), Chap. XII; Alfred H. Stone, "The Cotton Factorage System of the Southern States," in *American Historical Review* (New York, 1895-), XX (1915), 557-65.

<sup>7</sup> Attention was called to Georgetown's shallow harbor by John Drayton in *A View of South-Carolina as Respects her Natural and Civil Concerns* (Charleston, 1802), 170 n., 207-208. A quarter century later Robert Mills elaborated this point, adding that "obstructing bars increase as cultivation releases more soil into the rivers." *Statistics of South Carolina, including A View of its Natural, Civil, and Military History* (Charleston, 1826), 557, 559-67. Ulrich B. Phillips, *A History of Transportation in the Eastern Cotton Belt to 1860* (New York, 1908), 6, 34, and Leila Sellers, *Charleston Business on the Eve of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, 1934), 6-7, accept this explanation. On the ability of Salem, Massachusetts, to overcome this kind of handicap, see Samuel E. Morison, *The Maritime History of Massachusetts, 1783-1860* (New York, 1921), 96-97.

<sup>8</sup> Drayton, *View of South-Carolina*, Appendix and accompanying map.



hinterland was further drawn to Charleston by means of the steamboat and the railroad.<sup>9</sup> And so, having failed to control the business of its outlying region, Georgetown was unable to support the large mercantile establishments which were necessary to an adequate handling of the crops of its immediate vicinity. "... there are no regular merchants [in Georgetown], with a few exceptions," wrote Robert Allston's mother in 1820, "and [these] are obliged to leave this Place every Summer."<sup>10</sup> Some years later the editor of the *Georgetown Gazette*, in lamenting the passage of several weeks without the arrival of a single vessel from the North, remarked:

We begin to long earnestly for the "coming in" of our Yankee friends, with their apples, onions, cabbage, cheese, codfish and potatoes; and even, if they please, a little bacon. . . . The Barn-Yard Turkey is pleased to take the very centre of the dish, that the round Irish Potatoes may flank and front him, and also bring up the rear; and the wild Duck that feeds and flutters in the fields, is never so comfortable as when under a hot press of Weathersfield onions. But not to particularize, our friends bring us many acceptable things; and we say—God speed them.<sup>11</sup>

Under these circumstances the planters of Georgetown district shipped their rice directly from the plantation wharves, or the neighborhood "pounding mills,"<sup>12</sup> to the countinghouses of Charleston, employing for this purpose during the early years of the century the small schooners of the Yankee visitors and others that were locally owned.<sup>13</sup> In the

<sup>9</sup> This advance of Charleston into Georgetown's back country is best told in Phillips, *Transportation in the Eastern Cotton Belt*, 83-91, 349-55. Sundry details are supplied by the Allston Papers.

<sup>10</sup> Charlotte Ann Allston to R. F. W. Allston, March 2, 1820. The noticeable decrease each summer of merchants' advertisements in the Georgetown newspapers would seem to corroborate the latter part of this statement. On occasion, however, the factor advised the planter that certain commodities could be purchased more cheaply in Georgetown than in Charleston. Charles Kershaw to Charlotte Ann Allston, October 25, 1815; November 14, 1816; March 12, 1818; March 19, 1819.

<sup>11</sup> *Georgetown (S. C.) Gazette*, September 15, 1826.

<sup>12</sup> After the rice had been threshed it was first passed between millstones for the removal of the outer husk and then placed in mortars and "pounded" by power-driven pestles to remove the still tightly clinging inner husk.

<sup>13</sup> Elizabeth B. Pharo (ed.), *Reminiscences of William Hasell Wilson (1811-1902)* (Philadelphia, 1937), 18-19. The South Carolina names borne by several vessels regularly mentioned in the Allston Papers and in contemporary newspapers suggest that this traffic was not so largely in the hands of New England captains as Wilson says.

later period the steamboat began to encroach upon the sailing vessel.<sup>14</sup>

Some five hundred letters, covering the years from 1808 to 1867, and several account books of approximately the same period record business transactions between the Allstons and their agents in Charleston and other shipping points. With the exception, however, of the letters of Alexander W. Campbell, who acted as both factor and executor of the estate of Robert Allston's oldest brother during the years from 1834 to 1837, these documents relate principally to a firm established near the close of the eighteenth century by Charles Kershaw and continued through the next seventy-five years by a succession of partners under the names of Kershaw and Lewis; Lewis and Robertson; Robertson, Blacklock, and Company; and Thurston and Holmes.<sup>15</sup> Except for a brief period during the War Between the States, this firm handled the greatest part of the Allston business.

Kershaw was an Englishman who came to Charleston shortly after the Revolution where he remained active in rice factorage until his death in 1835.<sup>16</sup> The first letter from his hand shows him acting in 1808 as the factor of Robert's father, Benjamin Allston, Jr. On the death of Benjamin in the following year Kershaw, like Campbell in a later period, took up the duties of an executor in addition to those previously assumed.<sup>17</sup> This arrangement remained in force for eleven years; thereafter Kershaw and his successors served the Allstons as factors only.<sup>18</sup> Differences might be pointed out between the activities of the factor

<sup>14</sup> The types of vessels are indicated in the "Marine News" columns of the Charleston and Georgetown newspapers. Both schooner and steamboat appear to have followed the "outside" or ocean route. The first made the run "during daylight"; the second reduced the time by four or five hours and was less dependent upon wind and tide.

<sup>15</sup> These are the principal names under which the firm operated; others were used during brief periods. The continuity is certain in all except the last case; in this, references to certain records of Robertson, Blacklock, and Company in the possession of Thurston and Holmes seem to indicate a definite connection. Thurston and Holmes to Benjamin Allston, April 23, 1866. The date of dissolution of the firm has not been established.

<sup>16</sup> Obituary in the *Charleston Courier*, August 8, 1835; Kershaw's will in Charleston County, Court of Probate, Will Book H, 141; information furnished by Mrs. G. T. Kershaw, of Charleston, South Carolina.

<sup>17</sup> Kershaw to Charlotte Ann Allston, April 25, 1809.

<sup>18</sup> On the division of the estate of Benjamin Allston, Jr., in 1819 the several heirs executed a bond of \$25,000 to Kershaw to protect him against the claims of creditors.



who was also an executor and those of the factor pure and simple, but it would be difficult to show that the zeal of the one was greater in his principal's behalf than that of the other.

The services performed by these agents of the Allston family well illustrate the accepted definition of a factor as one who "could, and in many cases did, do anything which the principal could do through an agent."<sup>19</sup> Not infrequently the planter's children were entrusted to the care of the factor. When, for instance, young Robert was leaving for West Point in 1817, Kershaw arranged for his passage from Charleston. "... our city still remains sickly," he wrote to Mrs. Allston, "and although he has been taking medicine for his last illness he may not escape the malignant disorder which now prevails. Vessels are continually going to New York and I could get any of them to call at the Island [Sullivan's Island in Charleston harbor] and take Robert on board."<sup>20</sup> Later Kershaw sought in vain to gratify the mother's desire to place her youngest son with one of the Charleston business houses. "Merchants," he said, "will not take lads into their stores or counting houses without their parents find them in everything. . . . it is considered that what they learn in the stores is full compensation for their services."<sup>21</sup> At a later time Alexander Robertson, who managed the Allston correspondence after Kershaw's death, had to report the death of a younger member of the family while attending school in Charleston.<sup>22</sup> "What I did for our late Orphan Child," he wrote, "was no more than I felt bound to do. Could anxiety and care have kept her, she would now be with us. But it pleased God to call her. . . . I had everything done as though she was my own and discharged my last sad duty towards her by putting her in our private cemetery in St. Paul's church yard."

With his planting operations more or less continually expanding Robert Allston was a buyer rather than a seller in the slave market, but

<sup>19</sup> Norman S. Buck, *The Development of the Organisation of Anglo-American Trade, 1800-1850* (New Haven, 1925), 6-7.

<sup>20</sup> Kershaw to Charlotte Ann Allston, October 7, 1817.

<sup>21</sup> *Id.* to *id.*, March 12, 1818.

<sup>22</sup> Alexander Robertson to Allston, November 14, 1838. Previously Robertson had advised at great length concerning the choice of a school for this child. *Id.* to *id.*, January 16, 1838.



on occasion he found it necessary to sell Negroes belonging to estates of which he was acting as executor. In every case, whether of purchase or sale, the transaction was arranged by his factors.<sup>23</sup> If a Negro was to be hired out in Charleston,<sup>24</sup> or placed at a trade, such as shoemaking<sup>25</sup> or barbering,<sup>26</sup> or put in the hands of a doctor for treatment that could not be had in Georgetown,<sup>27</sup> the arrangement was made through the same channel. The Negro boy James affords a case in point. He had been sent to Charleston to learn the shoemaker's trade. Kershaw reported in 1819:

I have seen Mr. Black; he will give only ten dollars per month for James to find him, but you must find him in clothes and shoes, pay doctor's accounts and allow for the time he is absent whenever you send for him to Georgetown either at Christmas or any other time. Mr. Black says he is a good workman and capable of turning out work equal to any of his colour, but he is so very indolent that he requires a very tight hand kept over him.<sup>28</sup>

Plantation supplies were regularly purchased through the factor, and in addition he was called upon to procure every article that human taste could desire.<sup>29</sup> A shipment made in 1808 included a barrel of apples, a new cheese, a piano, and two kegs of nails.<sup>30</sup> When a woman's judgment was required in the selection of some piece of female apparel, the factor's wife was pressed into service.<sup>31</sup> On one occasion Robertson wrote in desperation that his time and that of a friend during an entire day had been spent in vain search of a certain kind of carriage which

<sup>23</sup> Lewis and Robertson to E. F. Blyth, January 26, 1835; A. W. Campbell to Allston, January 7, 31, 1837; Lewis and Robertson to *id.*, April 8, May 8, 1837; Robertson, Blacklock, and Company to *id.*, January 13, 14, 1859; sundry entries in the Allston Account Books.

<sup>24</sup> Kershaw to Charlotte Ann Allston, March 16, 1816; December 23, 24, 1817; A. W. Campbell to Allston, July 14, 1837.

<sup>25</sup> Kershaw to Charlotte Ann Allston, December 30, 1817; February 2, 1819.

<sup>26</sup> Lewis and Robertson to Allston, April 24, 1837.

<sup>27</sup> Lewis, Robertson, and Thurston to *id.*, December 21, 1838; Benjamin Allston to Robertson, Blacklock, and Company, July 24, 1859.

<sup>28</sup> Kershaw to Charlotte Ann Allston, February 8, 1819.

<sup>29</sup> The variety is best seen in those account books which have survived and in copies of parts of others. The latter were prepared from the current account book kept by the factor and sent periodically to the planter.

<sup>30</sup> Kershaw to Charlotte Ann Allston, October 1, 1808.

<sup>31</sup> *Id.* to *id.*, April 25, 1809; February 15, 25, 1815; February 7, 1817.

Allston had ordered, and that, as a last resort, he was sending his own as a substitute.<sup>32</sup> Even furnishings for the parish church were bought by the factors,<sup>33</sup> and, when a new building was erected for Prince Frederick's, they were called upon to act as treasurer of the building fund.<sup>34</sup>

Except in cases of large loans the factor was the planter's banker.<sup>35</sup> He carried his client's balance on deposit, using it, as need arose, in honoring drafts and in making purchases at the planter's order.<sup>36</sup> He bought bills of exchange,<sup>37</sup> gave advice on investments,<sup>38</sup> went into the market to purchase every form of property from bank<sup>39</sup> and railroad stock<sup>40</sup> to plantations,<sup>41</sup> and voted his client's proxy at stockholders' meetings.<sup>42</sup> He is even found on occasion going joint security on the planter's notes.<sup>43</sup> In one respect, however, the Allstons made less use of their agents than our knowledge of the factorage system in the antebellum South would lead us to expect. They do not appear to have

<sup>32</sup> Robertson to Allston, June 20, 1837.

<sup>33</sup> Kershaw to Charlotte Ann Allston, February 25, 1819; Lewis and Robertson to Allston, March 25, 28, 1937.

<sup>34</sup> Robertson to *id.*, April 9, 1861, and statement which appears on the walls of the church.

<sup>35</sup> On occasion Allston borrowed from the Charleston banks the large sums needed for capital outlays (canceled bonds in the Allston Papers), but it is interesting to note that every bond claim against him at the time of his death was held by a private individual. Allston *v.* Allston, Charleston County, Office of the Clerk of Court.

<sup>36</sup> On the subject of drafts drawn presumably by clients whose balances were exhausted, Robertson wrote Allston on November 14, 1858: " 'We don't accept' is the old rule and one that we must adhere to—or we will soon become involved. You, however, know that we don't hold always to it, with old and well tried friends. Only to guard against—— we must hold out the principle, and trust our old friends will support us in the stand; for it is pretty clear their true interest to do so."

<sup>37</sup> Kershaw to Charlotte Ann Allston, May 24, June 22, 1810; May 5, 1823; Robertson, Blacklock, and Company to Allston, August 29, 1859.

<sup>38</sup> Lewis and Robertson to Blyth, June 19, 1835; Robertson, Blacklock, and Company to Allston, April 14, 19, 1859.

<sup>39</sup> Kershaw to Charlotte Ann Allston, June 22, 1810; April 5, 1823; Lewis and Robertson to Blyth, May 2, June 19, 1835; Lewis, Robertson, and Thurston to Allston, November 14, 1838.

<sup>40</sup> Lewis and Robertson to Blyth, October 12, 1835; Robertson to Allston, November 14, 1838.

<sup>41</sup> Robertson to Allston, January 26, 1838; March 22, 1859.

<sup>42</sup> Lewis and Robertson to Blyth, March 5, 1836; Robertson to Allston, November 17, 1838.

<sup>43</sup> Lewis and Robertson to Allston, February 9, August 17, 1837; Robertson, Blacklock, and Company to *id.*, March 2, 1859.



required the heavy advances between seasons usually regarded as a chronic evil of plantation finance. During the eighteen seasons covered by the account book of "R. F. W. Allston in Acct. Curr. with Kershaw, Lewis, & Co." the largest amount paid for interest on advances in any one year was \$134.68. In eight of these years, in spite of the fact that Allston was drawing heavily upon his returns for investment purposes,<sup>44</sup> the account shows a balance in his favor.<sup>45</sup>

But in the final analysis the factor's most important service was the selling of the planter's crop, for on his success in this depended all other activities. Aided by the newspapers which carried every conceivable kind of information concerning the condition of the market,<sup>46</sup> the factor watched with eagle eye the ebb and flow of prices and advised his client accordingly.<sup>47</sup> Shipments, as we might expect, were heaviest during the weeks immediately following the harvest in August and September, but they continued with remarkable steadiness throughout the year.<sup>48</sup> The Allstons were among those who staggered their shipments with the

<sup>44</sup> At the time of his death Allston was carrying obligations somewhat in excess of \$255,000 (*supra*, n. 35). "It has been my custom when able," he tells us, "to pay off annually, all interest due, and an average of ten thousand dollars of principal." Charleston County, Court of Probate, Will Book N, 177.

<sup>45</sup> Kershaw, Lewis, and Robertson to Blyth, July 19, 1833; Lewis and Robertson to *id.*, January 5, February 29, 1836; *id.* to Allston, April 24, May 26, 1837. Allston's record in the management of his deceased brother's estate is equally impressive in this respect (Account Book of Estate of Genl. J. W. Allston in Acct. with A. W. Campbell), but other planters appear to have been less careful. On May 11, 1823, Kershaw wrote to Charlotte Ann Allston: "We have advanced to one friend or another all our disposable Funds and in place of receiving what we advanced, our Friends were in so much distress, occasioned by the low prices of produce, that in place of being able to return to us what they had borrowed they were in want of further help. It is in these times that our Business becomes very painful, we are compelled to refuse the assistance which we would willingly give."

<sup>46</sup> This included a daily list of rice cargoes arriving and departing, frequent summaries of the same covering periods of varying length, and price quotations and amounts of sales in both domestic and foreign markets. Files of the Charleston *Courier* and *Mercury*. That the newspaper price current was supplied to merchants in distant markets is revealed in letters of F. and C. Winthrop of Charleston to Moses Taylor of New York (Charleston Free Library).

<sup>47</sup> Kershaw to Charlotte Ann Allston, March 7, 1820; Lewis and Robertson to Blyth, August 5, 1836; February 5, 1838.

<sup>48</sup> This is clearly indicated in the newspaper lists of arrivals.

result that over a period of years the records show sales of some portion of their crop in every month.<sup>49</sup>

En route from planter to factor the rice cargo appears to have been protected by no other form of insurance than a ship captain's agreement to make delivery unless prevented by "the Dangers of the Sea and River."<sup>50</sup> And seldom was it insured even after it reached the factor's wharf, for ordinarily it was sold on the day of its arrival.<sup>51</sup> Sales were usually made at auction, for cash or payment within sixty days, to agents known as "rice buyers," who represented merchants in widely scattered markets.<sup>52</sup>

Except for a short period, when he appears to have specialized in producing large quantities of seed for sale to other planters,<sup>53</sup> Robert Allston sold mostly clean rice. The former had been carefully threshed by hand.<sup>54</sup> The latter had been threshed by machine on the plantation and husked and pounded either at Waverly Mill, which Allston was managing as an executor, or at one of the several great mills in Charleston.<sup>55</sup> After assignment by the factor to one of many grades ranging from "inferior" to "strictly prime" and "choice,"<sup>56</sup> it was packed in barrels,<sup>57</sup> or tierces, of approximately 600 pounds gross weight.<sup>58</sup> Other

<sup>49</sup> Dates of sale are recorded in the Account Books.

<sup>50</sup> Captains' receipts of November 22, December 11, 1819; February 5, 1823. Cargoes were occasionally found to be short, but only one serious loss is reported during the sixty years of the records. Kershaw and Lewis to Charlotte Ann Allston, January 9, 1824; Lewis and Robertson to Blyth, August 16, 1836; Robert Thurston to Allston, November 23, 1837; W. P. Lea to *id.*, November 25, 1837; Thurston and Holmes to Benjamin Allston, March 30, 1867.

<sup>51</sup> Lewis and Robertson to Blyth, October 12, 1835; March 1, 1838; A. W. Campbell to Allston, November 2, 1837; Lewis and Robertson to *id.*, October 17, November 16, 1837; March 20, 1838; Edward N. Thurston to Benjamin Allston, March 29, April 23, 1866.

<sup>52</sup> Kershaw to Charlotte Ann Allston, December 13, 1809; March 31, May 8, 24, 1810; July 30, 1812; April 19, 1823; Winthrop letters, cited *supra*, n. 46. Little light is shed by the Allston Papers on the trade after it reached the rice buyer.

<sup>53</sup> Account Books, 1837-1838, and orders for seed.

<sup>54</sup> For the merits of "hand-whipped" seed, see [Pringle], *A Woman Rice Planter*, 73-75, 79-81.

<sup>55</sup> Kershaw to Charlotte Ann Allston, October 1, 1819, and sundry accounts sales.

<sup>56</sup> Market quotations in the Charleston newspapers.

<sup>57</sup> Barrel was the common term, but tierce and cask were occasionally used. Robert Thurston to Allston, November 16, 23, 1837; Alexander McKenzie to *id.*, May 24, 1863.

<sup>58</sup> On this point, however, the factor advised: "Sales are often helped by the Barrels



planters, however, sold much rice in the rough or unhusked form.<sup>59</sup> Handled in bulk and reckoned by the bushel,<sup>60</sup> this was often preferred by foreign buyers, partly, it would seem, because the grain was thought to deteriorate if kept too long after husking<sup>61</sup> and partly because mills in the markets for which it was destined were eager for the profits from processing.<sup>62</sup>

On the completion of the sale of each parcel, no matter how small it might be, the factor rendered his client a detailed statement known as an "account sales." These vary so little in form that an analysis of one will explain the procedure followed throughout the whole period. On August 4, 1837, Lewis and Robertson advised Robert F. W. Allston of the sale of 69 barrels of clean rice ranging in weight from 621 to 707 pounds and 51½ barrels of "offal" (rice flour and small cracked grains), the total being the product of 1,568 bushels of rough rice pounded in Charleston at Nowell's Mill. Twenty barrels had been sold on July 25 to G. and I. Gibbon at \$3 13/16 per hundredweight; the next day 49 barrels were sold to C. Edmonston at \$3 7/8 per hundredweight; and on July 27 the 51½ barrels of offal were sold at prices ranging from \$3 5/8 to \$3 3/4 per hundredweight. The gross proceeds were \$1,706.89. From this amount the following charges were deducted:

|                                                              |          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Freight on rough rice from plantation to mill @ 6¼ cents     |          |
| per bushel .....                                             | \$ 98.00 |
| Freight on clean rice from mill to factor's wharf @ 25 cents |          |
| per barrel .....                                             | 18.75    |

being heavy and weighing 700 Gro., for all Coastwise freights, and to France, is paid by the Barrel, whether it weighs 650 or 750 Gro. and is oftentimes a matter of consideration to shippers." Lewis, Robertson, and Thurston to *id.*, December 7, 1838.

<sup>59</sup> The term paddy, meaning rough rice, which is generally used in later United States *Census Reports*, does not appear in the Allston Papers.

<sup>60</sup> Details from sundry letters and accounts sales.

<sup>61</sup> Kershaw to Charlotte Ann Allston, December 13, 1809; Robertson, Blacklock, and Company to Allston, August 6, 1859. If necessary, however, rice could be stored for months and even years. Kershaw to Charlotte Ann Allston, September 20, 1815.

<sup>62</sup> Ruffin, *Report . . . of the Agricultural Survey of South-Carolina*, 19-22. Ruffin asserted that the English tariff favored rough over clean rice in order to encourage mills in England.

|                                                                                                    |                      |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Mill toll ( $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent of gross receipts exclusive of freight<br>on rough rice) ..... | 111.56 <sup>63</sup> |
| Factor's commission ( $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent of gross receipts) .....                             | 43.58 <sup>64</sup>  |
| Cost of the barrels .....                                                                          | 28.75 <sup>65</sup>  |
| Coopering .....                                                                                    | 7.50                 |
| Landing and weighing .....                                                                         | 7.50 <sup>66</sup>   |
| Storage of $5\frac{1}{2}$ barrels of offal .....                                                   | .24                  |
| Total .....                                                                                        | <hr/> \$315.88       |

The planter's return from this sale was \$1,391.01, or 81.5 per cent of the selling price. The remaining 18.5 per cent was distributed as follows: freight 6.8 per cent, milling 6.5 per cent, factorage 2.7 per cent, and miscellaneous charges 2.5 per cent. When the milling was done at the plantation,<sup>67</sup> this charge was diverted to the planter's account, thereby reducing the cost of preparation and handling to 12 per cent of the selling price. Otherwise the ratio between charges and net proceeds varies little throughout the period covered by the Allston records.

No precise statement of the annual volume of the Allston business can be made. It would be safe to say, however, that in the 1850's it exceeded \$60,000.<sup>68</sup> On this sum the factor's commissions would have amounted to \$1,620. He may have collected an additional \$200 or \$300 as interest on advances;<sup>69</sup> storage charges probably yielded a small amount; and the planter's balance, which the factor held for periods of considerable length, may have been used to his profit. It would be diffi-

<sup>63</sup> This appears to have been  $7\frac{1}{2}$  per cent of the receipts from 69 of the  $74\frac{1}{2}$  barrels after the freight on the rough rice and the planter's refund for the barrels were deducted.

<sup>64</sup> This was  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent of the gross receipts including the refund for barrels, hence approximately 2.7 per cent of the actual selling price of the rice.

<sup>65</sup> If supplied by the mill, barrels cost the planter  $87\frac{1}{2}$  cents each for whole barrels,  $62\frac{1}{2}$  cents for half barrels. In the sale he received a refund of 50 cents for each. This figure was the difference between the cost and the refund. An effort was made by the planters in 1837 to force the refund up to \$1.00, but this failed. Lewis and Robertson to Allston, October 17, 1837.

<sup>66</sup> The wharfage rate was fixed by law and was published in the almanacs of the day. Kershaw and Lewis to Charlotte Ann Allston, December 18, 1823.

<sup>67</sup> During most of the twenty-three years that Robert F. W. Allston managed Waverly plantation, its mill was in active service pounding the Waverly crop and those of near-by plantations. Its receipts in 1856-1857 were \$15,786.32. Account Book of the Estate of J. W. Allston in Acct. with A. W. Campbell.

<sup>68</sup> The net proceeds of the Waverly crop alone in 1856-1857 were \$15,203.92.

<sup>69</sup> The rate was 7 per cent.



cult to show that the factor, unless he were also acting as an executor,<sup>70</sup> took more than these rewards for his services. He may have accepted rebates from the merchants who sold him the planter's supplies, but, if he did, the evidence has been successfully concealed.<sup>71</sup> He charged no commission on these purchases; nor is there any reason to believe that he charged brokerage on stocks and bonds which he bought, or premiums on bills of exchange, or fees of any other kind.<sup>72</sup> On the whole it would seem that the rice factor was willing to perform many extra services in order to secure the business of selling the planter's crop. He probably had no large capital investment; at the most he owned a warehouse where his office or countinghouse was located.<sup>73</sup> If he had to borrow to make advances to his clients, he ordinarily used for collateral the rice that was constantly passing through his hands;<sup>74</sup> but unless he dabbled in other lines, the cause it seems of the failure of A. W. Campbell,<sup>75</sup> his obligations were never heavy. Robertson summed up the position of the rice factor when he said in 1837: "The accounts today from England are still worse, and more must go. I mean merchants. Factors have no right to fail."<sup>76</sup>

The concluding letters of the factor's series in the Allston Papers tell an interesting story of the efforts to divert the rice trade into new channels during the War Between the States and to revive old practices in the years that followed. Upon the closing of the ocean route

<sup>70</sup> The usual commission in this case was  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent on receipts and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent on disbursements.

<sup>71</sup> For information on this point the writer has examined, in addition to Allston materials, the account books of Plowden C. J. Weston in the College of Charleston Library, and Mr. John dePorry has searched the Edward Frost records in the Library of Congress. None of these, however, are factors' accounts.

<sup>72</sup> How the planter's profit compared with that of the factor is a difficult question. Concerning the former Allston wrote: "The profits of a Rice plantation of good size and locality, are about eight per cent. per annum, independent of the privileges and perquisites of the plantation residence." R. F. W. Allston, *Essay on Sea Coast Crops* (Charleston, 1854), 37.

<sup>73</sup> Campbell to Allston, May 13, 1834; Lewis, Robertson, and Thurston to *id.*, December 7, 1838; "Some Charleston Wharves," in *Year Book, City of Charleston, South Carolina*, 1936 (Charleston, [1937]), 183-92.

<sup>74</sup> Lewis and Robertson to Allston, April 24, 1837.

<sup>75</sup> Campbell to *id.*, July 1, 1837.

<sup>76</sup> Robertson to *id.*, July 14, 1837.

between Georgetown and Charleston by the Federal blockade it was proposed to use the inland passage,<sup>77</sup> but this appears not to have been feasible. Georgetown still had no railroad connections,<sup>78</sup> and Allston was put to the limit of his resources. For a time he sent small amounts of rice by wagon to Kingstree on the Northeastern Railway.<sup>79</sup> Finding that the security of \$20,000 and the rental of \$100 per day that were demanded for a steamboat, which he proposed to charter, were prohibitive,<sup>80</sup> he built lighters which were soon being poled up the Peedee River to Mars Bluff, Society Hill, and Cheraw, and on Black River to his private station at Salters on the Northeastern.<sup>81</sup> At Cheraw, D. Malloy and Son acted as his factor; at Florence, Alexander McKenzie; and at Wilmington, DeRosset, Brown, and Company. From Mars Bluff, L. Gilchrist offered the following bit of unsolicited advice: "I hope you may be able to send your flats up soon, for if you can get your rice in the hands of men who are true to the *South* it is best."<sup>82</sup>

Such was the momentum given to this inland trade that it was continued successfully after Allston's death on April 12, 1864, and until the Federal occupation of the Georgetown district brought planting to a temporary halt. After that the trade gradually flowed back into the old channels. But in these later years the Allstons planted on a greatly reduced scale, all but one of their plantations having been sacrificed to the creditors of Robert's estate. Robertson, Blacklock, and Company appear either to have gone out of business or to have been reorganized by younger men under the name of Thurston and Holmes.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Andrew Johnstone to *id.*, June 4, 1861.

<sup>78</sup> A line to connect with the Northeastern Railroad was under construction at the beginning of the war, but it was not completed until years later. Allston to Benjamin Allston, August 18, 1860; Adele P. Allston to Charles P. Allston, October 19, 1862.

<sup>79</sup> Allston to Adele P. Allston, December 3, 1861.

<sup>80</sup> Robertson, Blacklock, and Company to Allston, August 14, September 2, October 2, 1862.

<sup>81</sup> Pringle, *Chronicles of Chicora Wood*, 27-30.

<sup>82</sup> L. Gilchrist to Allston, October 3, 1863.

<sup>83</sup> The books of the former were sent to Columbia and there burned. Edward N. Thurston's references to these records suggest that he and his partner had taken over the accounts of Robertson, Blacklock, and Company. Robertson, Blacklock, and Company to Allston, October 10, 1862; Thurston and Holmes to Benjamin Allston, April 23, 1866.











